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RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 5633
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RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 7772
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SUBJECT: SEOUL - PRESS BULLETIN; FEBRUARY 19, 2010

TOP HEADLINES

Chosun Ilbo

Korean Medical Association: "Serious Medical Errors
with Not-Guilty Court Ruling on MBC TV's "PD Diary"

JoongAng Ilbo

Study Shows that Students Rely on
Private Institutes over Public School Education

Dong-a Ilbo

19 Universities Seeking to Open Pharmacy Colleges
Pass First Government Screening

Hankook Ilbo, Segye Ilbo, Seoul Shinmun, All TVs
500-Meter Speed Skating Gold Medalist Mo Tae-bum
Adds Silver in 1,000-Meter Event

Hankyoreh Shinmun

Two Years after Launch of Lee Myung-bak Administration, Private
Education Spending Remains
Heavy Economic Burden for Households

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Deputy State Department Spokesman Mark Toner, in a Feb. 17 regular
briefing, said that the U.S. has no plans to hold additional talks
with North Korea. He also said that he has nothing to announce on
reports that North Korea's top nuclear negotiator, Kim Kye-gwan, may
visit the U.S. next month. (Hankyoreh, all TVs)

According to Good Friends, a Seoul-based rights group, North Korea
has allowed private markets to reopen nationwide and is no longer
cracking down on trading in food at the markets, after its failed
currency reform worsened food shortages and fueled anger directed at
the regime. (JoongAng, Dong-a)

MEDIA ANALYSIS

-N. Korea

Left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun and all TV networks carried reports quoting Deputy State Department Spokesman Mark Toner as saying during a Feb. 17 regular briefing that the U.S. has no plans to hold additional talks with North Korea "at this time." He was further quoted regarding reports of a possible visit to the U.S. next month by chief North Korean nuclear negotiator Kim Kye-gwan: "I don't have anything to announce on that."

Hankyoreh Shinmun, however, observed that the U.S. spokesman's use of the words, "not at this time," indicates that the U.S. has not completely closed off the possibility of a second round of bilateral talks with North Korea.

President Obama's Meeting with the Dalai Lama
Most ROK media gave attention to President Obama's Feb. 18 meeting at the White House with the Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader in exile. The media noted that the President met him in the Map Room, a reception room, rather than in the Oval Office, his official office, and interpreted this as being aimed at not offending China, which has strongly opposed the President's meeting with the Dalai Lama.

Conservative Chosun Ilbo headlined its article: "Obama, Dalai Lama Meet Quietly." Moderate Hankook Ilbo's headline read: "Obama Meets Privately with Dalai Lama, Apparently Out of Concern that It Would Strain Relations with China"

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FEATURES

WHY DOES THE KOREAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION RAISE OBJECTIONS NOW?
(Hankyoreh Shinmun, February 12, Page 12)

By Medical Reporter Kim Yang-jung

In a controversial announcement, the Korean Medical Association (KMA) said that medical circles do not agree with the not-guilty verdict for MBC TV's "PD Diary," which reported on the risk of mad cow disease from U.S. beef. (However,) experts on mad cow disease noted that the KMA's claims are a distortion of basic facts, and that it is questionable whether the association thoroughly verified its claims.

The KMA on February 18 issued a press release regarding the court decision on MBC TV's "PD Diary," in which the association expressed deep concern, saying that medical circles strongly disagree with some parts of the court's ruling. The KMA argued that the program did not provide a balanced reporting of Aretha Vinson's death because it only conveyed the position of Vinson's family who filed a suit against the doctor, without presenting her doctor's side of the story. The KMA also questioned why the court did not see a problem with the "PD Diary" episode even though an autopsy found that Vinson died of Wernicke's encephalopathy, not vCJD, a human variant of mad cow disease. Additionally, regarding the program's report that Koreans are genetically susceptible to mad cow disease, the KMA said that the court ruling is seriously flawed because it did not acknowledge that genetic and environmental factors conspire to cause the disease.

In this regard, Park Sang-pyo, a policy director of the Veterinarians' Solidarity for Public Health, pointed out, "Considering that the episode was broadcast on April 29, 2008, and a lawsuit by (the mother of) Aretha Vinson came a month later on May 27, "PD Diary" covered the case before the lawsuit was even filed. In addition, while "PD Diary" interviewed both the patient's bereaved family and her doctor, the KMA is nevertheless distorting basic facts."

Woo Suk-kyun, a policy director of the Korean Federation of Medical Groups for Health Rights, made a rebuttal, saying, "By taking issue with ("PD Diary") not airing the position of medical doctors on the

cause of death of Aretha Vinson, the KMA is disregarding basic medical ethics. In the U.S. as well as the ROK, it is against basic ethical principles and the duties of a doctor to talk about patient information carelessly in places other than a court."

Regarding the "PD Diary" report that Koreans are particularly susceptible to the human form of BSE, Woo Hee-jong, a professor of veterinary medicine at Seoul National University, noted, "It (Koreans being more susceptible to the human form of BSE) has been confirmed several times by many domestic and foreign researchers, including the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Hallym University College of Medicine. I also doubt that the KMA listened sufficiently to the opinions of BSE experts among its members."

(Editor's Note: Chosun Ilbo also carried a report on the KMA's statement, focusing coverage on the KMA's disagreement with the court ruling. Its headline read: "Korean Medical Association: "Serious Medical Errors with Not-Guilty Court Ruling on MBC TV's "PD Diary")

STEPHENS